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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS TO REPORTERS EN ROUTE TO BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, FROM BRAZIL
NOVEMBER 19, 1994

SECRETARY PERRY: I'll talk very briefly about Argentina objectives and then I'll give you a very brief report on what's going on in Bihac right now.

Argentina has been a very good partner to the United States in a number of international operations, particularly in the peacekeeping field -- in Desert Storm and Haiti. And so one of the things is I'm going down there to say thank you and to build on that excellent relationship. We want to develop continuing partnership in the peacekeeping field. In particular, I hope to work out the details of how Argentina will cooperate and assist the UNMIH operation -- that's the UN operation in Haiti when that comes up next year.

Secondly, I want to discuss with them their proposal which they call the "White Helmets Proposal," which is forming a school and some training in international humanitarian operations. We have had some discussions with them on that already. That idea is fairly matured and we'd like to reach sort of final agreement on what they're going to do and how we're going to support them in that area.

We will also be talking in some detail about joint exercises and exchange programs. We have a good program of joint exercises and exchanges with Argentina and we want to build on that. They are going to an all-volunteer army and they're seeking to professionalize their military. They see these joint exercises and exchanges as a very important vehicles to doing that.

Let me pivot now over to Bihac. There has been an air attack against Bihac by Krajina Serb attack aircraft. The report I have, which I cannot confirm for you at this time is that two aircraft were involved in the attack and one of them crashed in the vicinity of Bihac. I cannot confirm that the number was two. Two is what I have reported. I can confirm that one of them crashed. I can also confirm that it was not, repeat not, shot down by NATO. NATO did not have an air operation involved here. So I do not know whether the airplane crashed from mechanical reasons or whether it was shot down by ground fire. I just don't have that information at this point. I also don't know what casualties may have been involved either in the airplane or on the ground where the plane landed.

Now, setting aside the details of what happened there, it raises a very important issue. This is the kind of an operation which is prohibited in UN resolutions and for Bosnia but in Croatia.

Q. You said earlier Crimean, I guess you meant Croatia.

SECRETARY PERRY: K-r-a-j-i-n-a. It goes around Bihac, which is in Croatian boundaries, but which is occupied by the Krajina Serbs. Now getting back to NATO. The UN resolution which calls for airstrikes does not extend into Croatia, and therefore, while this action would have called for an airstrike and NATO would have been called on to do it, there is a very real technical problem in that the UN resolution does not extend airstrikes into Croatia. So at this time, there's a session in the UN Security Council being called, and the United States is proposing that the UN resolution be modified so that there will be authority to conduct airstrikes in response to this kind of action.

Q. Into the Krajina?

SECRETARY PERRY: Into the Krajina. With, of course, the permission of the Croatian government. That is, we would have to get the permission of the Croatian government to do it. That's a status report and we'll just have to keep following that story to see how it develops. We'll have to first of all see what comes out of the UN Security Council meeting and then, secondly, NATO will then have to decide what sort of action it's going to take. I'll keep following these developments very closely and I'll brief you as we get more information on them. That's all I have at this time.

Q. This attack in which the plane crashed -- this is not the same as the attack yesterday, this is another attack? Is that not right? There were some stories about an attack yesterday in which apparently two planes were involved. Is this a different attack? In the clips we have about two planes but the stories did not mention a plane crashing that I understand.

SECRETARY PERRY: This event has happened within the last 24 hours. I'll try to get you more detailed information on exactly when the plane crashed -- in the next hour before we land.

Q. How about Bihac itself? Is it in any danger of falling or is it any closer to falling than it was say two, three days ago? Or is it just that the attacks on it continue.

SECRETARY PERRY: There have been no ground attacks on the city of Bihac. The Serbs continue to move forward very aggressively in areas around Bihac. There have been no thrusts into Bihac at this point.

Q. Is there any further movement on a decision on whether or not to declare the weapons exclusion zone there? Has there been any final decision to do that?

SECRETARY PERRY: No. There's no action on that.

Q. Is the United States going to continue to push for that?

SECRETARY PERRY: What we're pushing for right now is to deal first of all with this airplane problem. Secondly, to see if we can reach agreement among our NATO partners on what specific actions by the Serbs would be appropriately responded by airstrikes. The exclusion zone isn't quite pertinent to the particular situation we're now in in Bihac. We have under active discussion with our allies in this NATO air coalition the particular actions that would be appropriate for airstrikes. So that is still under discussion.

Q. Just a couple of quick things on Argentina. Number one, I assume you plan to discuss the PAMPA 2000 with them, just like you discussed the Tucano with the Brazilians, and will you see one of them?

SECRETARY PERRY: No. I will not. I don't have any plans to look at it or even discuss it. They may bring it up with me but I'm not really down there -- there's nothing I can do about that issue. That's in open competition right now.

Q. It is also being considered along with the Tucano? It's still in the running?

SECRETARY PERRY: It's still in the running.

Q. Do you have any plans to discuss any arms issues with them as far as sales?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't have any plans to discuss arms issues with them. They may bring up some to me and I will be prepared to respond to them if they do. They have a request in for an anti-tank missile and they may very well bring that up to me and we'll discuss it with them if they do.

Q. How many TOWs are they asking for?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't have it in my head. I'm sure we have that information, though.

Q. What else do you plan on discussing with [President] Menem in terms of drug interdiction or any concrete things you're planning to discuss with Menem, besides drug interdiction and...

SECRETARY PERRY: We may very well discuss what role the military can play in counterterrorism since there've been some specific terrorist attacks in Argentina, as you know. So that may be very strong in their mind. Dealing with terrorists is not primarily a military issues, either in the US or in Argentina, so the cooperation by them is by other agencies than the US Defense Department. They may bring up to us what role the Defense Department could play in helping them in that.

Q. You mean like the Israeli attacks?

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

Q. How about intelligence -- providing them with intelligence information?

SECRETARY PERRY: They may bring up such questions to me. That's right. I'm not going down there to propose anything in that line or discuss it but I would discuss it if they bring that up to me. That's right.

Q. In Brazil you said you wouldn't rule out the possibility of some time in the future selling F-16s to Brazil. Does that play the same with Argentina?

SECRETARY PERRY: The whole issue with the selling of any advanced weaponry like the F-16 is a regional security issue. So when the US government considers proposals like that, we have to consider it as a regional issue. So we would consider Brazil and Argentina and Venezuela, all as sort of one package.

Q. As opposed to a country by country basis?

SECRETARY PERRY: The proposal would be considered country by country, but we'd look at it in a regional context.

Q. Would the Brits oppose that in the case of Argentina given the Falklands situation or do you think that they've gone past that now?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't know what the Brits view on that would be right now. That's certainly something we would want to discuss with the British. I mean we would certainly seek the British view on that sale before we made a final decision.

Thank you.

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Perry, Menem talk of humanitarian corps

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) — Defense Secretary William Perry arrived in Argentina yesterday for talks with President Carlos Menem and government leaders on international humanitarian aid, terrorism and closer bilateral military cooperation.

Mr. Perry flew here for two days of meetings on the final leg of a six-day South American trip to improve U.S. military relations with Brazil and Argentina.

He told reporters traveling with him from Rio de Janeiro that he would discuss expanded joint military exercises with Mr. Menem in a meeting this morning and was

eager to talk about Mr. Menem's plan for a new international humanitarian aid corps under the United Nations.

"I want to discuss with them their proposal which they call the 'White Helmets,' which is forming a school and some training in international humanitarian operations," Mr. Perry said.

"That idea is fairly matured, and we would like to reach sort of a final agreement on what they are going to do and how we are going to support them in that area."

Argentine troops and civilian workers are now serving in a number of peacekeeping and humani-

tarian roles in several countries, including Zaire, Haiti and Croatia.

U.S. officials said they were enthusiastic about the humanitarian aid idea because it would permit the quick formation of a group of international volunteers and organizations when the United Nations called for an aid operation.

Mr. Perry told reporters he would also discuss with Mr. Menem cooperation between the United States and Argentina in combatting international terrorism. The secretary said he would be willing to discuss sharing intelligence information with Argentina but gave no details.